

Portage Public Library CHILD SAFETY POLICY

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I Purpose

- (A) The Portage Public Library welcomes children to use its facilities and services. Parents/guardians are always responsible for their children, the care of their children, and the acts of their children. Library staff cannot take responsibility for the care of children of any age. The public library, unlike schools, does not serve in loco parentis (in place of a parent). Library staff cannot act in the place of parents, nor can they act as a substitute for daycare in providing constant care and supervision. Therefore, responsibility for the care, safety, and behavior of children using the library rests with the parent/guardian or caregiver. A caregiver must be at least 12 years of age.
- (B) Parents/guardians are reminded that unexpected events can occur while children are left unattended. Some examples include: the child could wander out of the building on his/her own, the child could be approached by untrustworthy people, or the child could be physically injured.

II Requirements and Responsibilities

- (A) All children must abide by the rules in the library Public Behavior Policy. It is the responsibility of the parent or caregiver to ensure all children are abiding by the library rules. It may be necessary that a child must be supervised at all times by a parent or caregiver for the child to abide by the library rules, such as when a child has additional needs related to physical or mental ability, inconsistent behavior patterns, emotional problems, lack of adequate attention span, or incomplete social skills, that prevent the child from following the rules on their own.
- (B) All children should have the telephone number of someone who can assist them in an emergency. It is important that all children have a library card. Accurate home and work telephone numbers of parents must be provided on the library card account.
- (C) Children age 8 or younger must have a parent or caregiver accompanying them unless the child is participating in a library program. The library strongly recommends that parents and caregivers attend programs with their children; however, parents or caregivers for children age 8 or younger who do not attend the program with the child must remain in the building. Parents or caregivers are always responsible for the actions of their children.
- (D) Children age 9 – 12 may use the Library unattended as long as they abide by the library rules. It is important for staff to take note of disruptions caused by children who apparently are unaccompanied. Parents/guardians are always responsible for the actions of their children.

- (E) Children behaving inappropriately will be informed of the rules. Parents or caregivers accompanying the child(ren) will be informed of the rules as well. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child shall be asked to leave the library.

III Library Staff Actions

- (A) At times children will be asked to leave the library due to closing time or due to inappropriate behavior by the child.
- (B) Library staff will use reasonable judgment when estimating the age of children. The library will not require children to prove their age for library use; however, if behavior issues arise, or if library staff suspects a young child is unsupervised, they will work with the child to determine their age in an effort to enforce this policy.
- (C) If a child age 9 – 12 is asked to leave the library and is unaccompanied by a parent/guardian or appropriate-aged caregiver, or if the child is under age 9 and unattended by a parent/guardian or appropriate-aged caregiver, the staff will:
1. Attempt to comfort the child, if necessary.
 2. Attempt to locate the parent or caregiver in the library and explain the Child Safety Policy to the parent or caregiver.
 3. Make every effort to contact the parent or caregiver, who is not in the library, to come and pick up the child. Staff will express the library's concern for the child's safety and explain the Child Safety Policy. Staff will ask for the name of the person who will pick up the child, and explain that formal identification (preferably a photo ID) is needed upon arrival to verify the name. Staff will explain that if the name of the person picking up the child does not match the one they are given over the telephone, the police will be called and the child will not be allowed to leave. Staff will write an Incident Report.
 4. Call the Portage Police Department to pick up the child, if the parent or caregiver cannot be located within 30 minutes. Staff will notify the library director that police have been called and write an Incident Report.
 5. Encourage an unattended child to contact the parent or guardian if it is within 15 minutes of closing time. If a parent or caregiver cannot be reached or does not arrive within 15 minutes after closing, library staff will call the Portage Police Department to pick up the child. Staff will notify the library director that police have been called and write an Incident Report.
 6. Two (2) library staff members will remain with the child until the parent, caregiver, or police arrive. This is paid time for the two (2) staff members who remain with the child after the library closes. Before the child is allowed to be picked up by a parent or caregiver, library staff need to verify the name of the person picking up the child (check formal identification, photo ID is best) with what was given to them on the telephone. If the name does not match the name given over the telephone, staff will call the police for assistance.

7. Once the child is in the care of the police, staff will leave a note on the library door stating "Unattended child is in the custody of the Portage Police Department, 117 W. Pleasant St., 742-2174". Names will NOT be stated on the sign, nor will names be given to ANYONE asking, including people claiming to be parents or caregivers. They will be directed to the Portage Police Department.
8. Library staff will not transport any child from the library to another location.

This policy replaces any previous policy regarding Child Safety.

Approved by the Portage Public Library Board of Trustees
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